



# WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

## What Is a Veterans' Agent?



*Karen Greenwood and Heidi Kruckenberg talk about Karen's role as Veterans' Agent*

Under Massachusetts law, every city and town in the Commonwealth maintains a Department of Veterans' Services office, which is staffed by a Veterans' Agent. Karen Greenwood is the Veterans' Agent for the City of Worcester. She explains that her role as

Veterans' Agent is to "assist veterans and their dependents to coordinate benefits from the state and federal government." This coordination includes referrals for a range of services, such as homeless programs, Social Security, and career centers. The Veterans' Agent's main function is to take applications for state Chapter 115 benefits, a needs-based financial assistance program for veterans and their eligible dependents.

Karen said the most common question folks ask her is: "How can I find my discharge papers?" She, like most Veterans' Agents statewide, has online access to the Massachusetts Military War Records Office, and can view digital copies of discharge papers. If a veteran's discharge is not held at the Massachusetts office, Karen helps the veteran request it from the National Personnel Records Center. She explains the importance of discharge papers: "In order to determine eligibility for veterans' benefits, the Veterans' Agent will need to see your DD Form 214. This form is your ticket to both state and federal veterans' benefits."

Karen, like her counterparts across the state, is a veteran herself. She served in the Navy during the Vietnam era. There are a handful of other cities and towns whose Veterans' Agents are women. Regardless of gender, Veterans' Agents are there to help women veterans learn about and apply for the benefits they earned. If you're interested in meeting with your local Veterans' Agent, call your City or Town Hall and ask to speak to Veterans' Services.

## A Message from Heidi

One of the Women Veterans' Network's first tasks was to compile a strictly confidential record of women veterans who live in Massachusetts. Over the past nine years, our database has grown considerably, but still contains less than half of the women veterans in the state. VA and Census data indicate that over 28,000 women veterans live in Massachusetts. The existing database contains names and addresses of about 13,000 women veterans, and is used as the mailing list for our biannual newsletter. Therefore, having a veteran's name in our database ensures that she is aware of the benefits, services, and programs that she is entitled to.

I appreciate the team of folks who work together to help add names to our growing list of women veterans. Members of the Women Veterans' Network Steering Committee and Veterans' Agents help with the crusade by encouraging the women they meet to add their names to the record. A long list of agencies and organizations have Women Veterans' Network posters with tear-off postcards hanging in their offices.

It has been said that "teamwork divides the task and doubles the success." I consider the outreach efforts of everyone who talks about our database to be invaluable. Yet, I wonder where the rest of the Massachusetts' women veterans are. For this reason, I would like to enlist everyone's help in this cause. Please continue to help spread the word about the Women Veterans' Network database and encourage the women you meet to add their names to the list so we can keep them informed. If we can double our current success, then we will have nearly every woman veteran in the state on our database. Keep up the good work, we're halfway there!

*Heidi Kruckenberg—Women's Coordinator*

*To add a name to the Network Database—  
email: [dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us](mailto:dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us) OR  
call: 617-210-5781*

## VA News & Updates

### Did You Know?



*Campuses of the VA Boston Healthcare System (l-r) Brockton, Jamaica Plain, and West Roxbury*

A survey of women veterans in 2004 found that women who do not use the VA did not realize that they were eligible

for care and had a lack of knowledge of both VA services and benefits. The survey also found that younger women have the least amount of knowledge of VA services. To this end, I will provide an overview of some of the services offered by the VA Boston Healthcare System.

The **Women's Health Programs** at VA Boston Healthcare System are dedicated to providing the highest quality of medical, mental health, and specialty care. The Women Veterans Program Managers can facilitate your entry into the system, can assess and identify your needs, and will coordinate access to services. Please contact us, Pat Robinson, LICSW (857-364-4120) or Diane Harness-DiGloria, NP (774-826-1435).

The **Women's Stress Disorder Treatment Team** (WSDTT) offers outpatient services for PTSD and other trauma-related problems such as depression and anxiety using several evidence-based treatments such as individual and group psychotherapy, psychological assessment, and psychiatry. Additional support and psychoeducation groups include Understanding the Effects of Trauma, the Older Women's Support group, a Women's Identity group, a Women's OEF/OIF group, and Women in Recovery.

**TRUST House** is the women veteran's therapeutic transitional residence program. It is a beautiful home to seven women veterans in a quiet Jamaica Plain neighborhood. The program has four components: individual and group therapy within the WSDTT; intensive case management; vocational counseling and work experience through Veterans Industries/Compensated Work Therapy; and intensive milieu treatment addressing interpersonal dynamics. TRUST house specializes in the treatment of women with PTSD (including Military Sexual Trauma), depression, anxiety, dissociation, and substance abuse/addiction. For more information, contact Tracy Sweeney, LICSW (857-364-4149).

*(continued next column)*

The **Women's Homelessness Program** provides intensive case management to homeless women veterans and their children and to women who are at risk of homelessness. Referrals are made to the myriad of "specialized" programs for women veterans within the VA system and to job, financial, and housing resources in the community. Since its inception in 2000, the program has provided services to more than 250 women veterans. For more information, please contact Lauren Dever (857-364-4027) or Meredith Powers-Lupo (857-364-4940).

**Coming Soon**—VA Boston Healthcare System will open a new specialized PTSD program for women to be called the **Women's PTSD and Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program**. This six-week post-detoxification residential treatment program will provide state-of-the art treatment for PTSD and substance abuse for women in New England and nationwide. Coming to VA Boston Healthcare Systems' Brockton campus in the fall of 2006. For more information, please contact Karen Guthrie (857-364-5534).

*by Pat Robinson, Women Veterans Program Manager*

### Save the Date

#### **Women Veterans' Benefits Forum**

October 19, 2006 1-4 PM

Barsamium Auditorium, West Roxbury VA

1400 VFW Parkway

West Roxbury, MA

For information, call 857-364-4120

### **New Gynecologist Appointed at VA Boston Healthcare System**

VA Boston Healthcare System is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Najmosama Nikrui as the staff Gynecologist and Gynecological Surgeon in the Women Veterans' Health Center. Dr. Nikrui specializes in gynecology-oncology and comes to the VA with a wealth of experience in this field. She provides clinical care for a variety of gynecology related problems and has experience with numerous office procedures and general gynecology services. Her compassion for her patients goes beyond treating the disease and is seen in her dedication to restore quality of life for the women in her care.

## Upcoming Events

### Governor's Advisory Committee Luncheon



*Dr. Shakti Sabharwal will provide keynote remarks at the Luncheon*

The Massachusetts Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans cordially invites all women veterans and their guests to attend the annual luncheon on **Saturday, October 14, 2006** at 12:00 noon. For the second year, the luncheon will be at the Hanscom Air Force Base Officer's Club. There will be a jewelry sale, raffle, and VA Health Fair immediately before the luncheon.

Keynote speaker Dr. Shakti Sabharwal will speak about her military service in Iraq for the Army National Guard. Her talk is entitled "War in Iraq: A Physician's Perspective." Please order your tickets (cost \$20 per person) before October 7, as no tickets will be sold at the door. Call Stephanie Landry (781-925-4486) for more information.

### 7th Annual VA Women Veterans' Recognition Day

The Women Veterans' Healthcare Programs of the VA Boston Healthcare System will host its seventh annual Women Veterans' Recognition Day with an information fair and luncheon on **Sunday, November 26, 2006**. This holiday event will begin at 11:00 a.m. at the USS Jacob Jones VFW, Post 2017, Eastern Ave., Dedham, MA.

Before lunch there will be an information fair. The catered lunch will be holiday fare (turkey dinner). This year's keynote speaker is Army National Guard Capt. Margaret Oglesby. She served for nine months as Commander of the 747<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company at the Kabul Military Training Center in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Captain Oglesby received the Bronze Star for her service in Afghanistan in 2003.

Please reserve early, this event has been a sell-out luncheon the past several years. Contact Jeri Rumsis (774-826-3133), Pat Robinson (857-364-4120) or Diane Harness-DiGloria (774-826-1435) with questions. Tickets cost \$17 each. Please return the reservation form below before the November 11th deadline.

#### **Governor's Advisory Committee Luncheon Registration Form Saturday, October 14, 2006, Noon Hanscom AFB Officer's Club**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of tickets: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Choice of meal: grilled chicken breast \_\_\_\_\_  
baked scrod \_\_\_\_\_

(please indicate choices by number, not a check mark)

**Checks payable to: Women Veterans' Committee**

**Mail this form with your check to:**

Stephanie Landry  
290 Newport Rd.  
Hull, MA 02045

**DEADLINE: October 7, 2006**

#### **\*VA RECOGNITION DAY RESERVATION FORM\***

**Luncheon date: November 26, 2006**

**Catered Lunch at \$17 per person:** Chicken soup, salad, turkey dinner with all the fixin's, rolls, coffee/tea, and dessert

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Vet: Y N

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check in the amount of:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ turkey dinners @ \$17 each.

**Make checks payable to:  
Women Veterans' Healthcare**

**Mail this form with your check to:**

Diane Harness-DiGloria, Women's Health Center  
Brockton VA Medical Center  
940 Belmont St.  
Brockton, MA 02301

**DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 11, 2006**



## Celebrate Outstanding Women Veterans

The contributions of Massachusetts' women in the military will be honored this Veterans' Day week at the "Women Are Veterans Too" ceremony, which will be held on **Wednesday, November 8** at 10:30 a.m. in the State House's Nurses Hall. This second annual event will feature presentations by women veterans and their supporters, as well as special recognition of an outstanding woman veteran.

Please nominate a special woman for the "Outstanding Woman Veteran Award." Nominees must currently or previously have served active duty in the regular military, National Guard, or Reserve. Nominations must include: an overview of military service and awards; a summary of contributions to the military; and any personal sacrifices or hardships the woman endured in order to serve in the military. For an official nomination form, please visit [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans) or call 617-210-5781.

Nominations are due no later than September 29, 2006, and should be mailed to the Women Veterans' Network, 600 Washington St., Suite 1100, Boston, MA 02111, or e-mailed to [DVSWomen@vet.state.ma.us](mailto:DVSWomen@vet.state.ma.us).

## Veterans' Day Here Again



*The State House will host its annual Veterans' Day ceremony*

Before we know it, November 11th will be here again—Veterans' Day 2006.

Veterans' Day is a salute to all veterans who have served, and not only those who have served during time of war. We salute all veterans, and remember and thank them on November 11, each and every year at the State House in Boston.

**November 11, 2006**, at 10:00 a.m., you, your family, and friends are welcome to attend and honor all those who have served. The ceremony is open to the public, all are welcome.

*by Sharlene Queenan, Department of Veterans' Services*

**Many cities and towns hold Veterans' Day ceremonies. Call City or Town Hall to ask for details about your community's observance of Veterans' Day.**

## Your Questions Answered

25 Frequently Asked Questions from  
Massachusetts' Women Veterans



COMPILED BY THE WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK  
STEERING COMMITTEE

[www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans)

617-210-5781

The Women Veterans' Network Steering Committee has compiled a booklet answering the 25 most frequently asked questions of Massachusetts' women veterans. This new publication is formatted like the *Welcome Home Guide* as an easy-to-use reference tool.

The *25 Frequently Asked Questions* books are available at no charge,

please call the Women Veterans' Network to request a copy (617-210-5778). The questions are also answered on the Department of Veterans' Services website at [www.mass.gov/veterans](http://www.mass.gov/veterans).

## Women Protecting US

The U.S.S. Massachusetts Memorial Committee is preparing an exhibit about women in the military for permanent installation onboard the *Battleship Massachusetts* in Fall River. The exhibit, to be called "Women Protecting US," will encourage and support a host of scholarly activities related to women's military studies in the widest sense. If you would like to help this project, interview for the oral history collection, or loan your interesting documents, artifacts, and memorabilia for display, please contact Laurie Carlson, Women's Exhibit Coordinator, by email ([womenprotectingus@battleshipcove.org](mailto:womenprotectingus@battleshipcove.org)) or phone (508-678-1100).

Women Protecting US is presented in association with the Minerva Center, Inc., and the Minerva Society for the Study of Women and War and is sponsored in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities. As your official veterans' memorial to World War II, the Korean, Vietnam, Persian Gulf Wars and the events of 9/11, Battleship Cove is dedicated to acknowledging the contributions of women veterans.

*by Laurie Carlson, Women's Exhibit Coordinator,  
Battleship Cove*

## New Housing Options for Women Veterans

Options for emergency and transitional housing for women veterans is better than ever in the Bay State. Two agencies have recently and two will shortly open doors to new housing specifically for women veterans. These programs provide a range of services in various regions.

### Doors Already Open

**United Veterans of America, Inc., (UVA)** has a house on the Northampton VA campus in **Leeds** that is especially for women veterans. The UVA program provides resident veterans with treatment and recovery from drug and alcohol addictions along with medical services. For information, please contact Steve Como at 413-584-4040, Ext. 2288. **Massachusetts Veterans Inc., (MVI)** in **Worcester** recently opened the doors to its women's housing program. The MVI program offers an alcohol and drug-free environment coupled with case management services. For information and admission, contact Jessica Lemenager at 508-791-5348, Ext. 124.

### Opening Shortly

The **Chelsea Soldiers' Home** will open its women's dormitory wing early this fall. The private dormitory wing will provide housing to veterans who can live in an independent setting and who require minimal assistance with the activities of daily living. For information, call 617-884-5660. Also coming soon: a women's transitional housing program in **New Bedford**. The Southeastern Massachusetts Veterans Housing Program, Inc., **Veterans' Transition House (VTH)** received grant money to rehabilitate a house specifically for women veterans. For more information, please contact Nora Rose at 508-992-5313.

## What We Don't Record, We Lose!



The Women In Military Service For America Memorial (WIMSA) is the only major national memorial honoring all women who served in our nation's defense throughout history. President of the Memorial Foundation, Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught (USAF, Retired) has set a goal to have 500,000 entries in the Memorial Register by next fall, when WIMSA will celebrate its tenth anniversary. More than two million women have served in defense of our nation. The individual histories of nearly 250,000 of these women come to life in the Memorial Register.

The Register is an interactive computer database that allows Memorial visitors access to military histories, photographs, and memorable military experiences of registered servicewomen. If you are a servicewoman, or know of a servicewoman, past or present, please help preserve this important and long overlooked portion of history by filling out a registration form today for yourself, a family member, or friend. Let's all help General Vaught reach her goal by encouraging the women veterans we meet to add their stories to the Register. Every woman's story is important and any information is better than no information. You can now register online at [www.womensmemorial.org](http://www.womensmemorial.org), or call 800-222-2294 to request a registration form by mail.

## Vet Center Reaching Out to Women



*Jenny D'Olympia in her flight suit during active duty with the U.S. Air Force*

Hello, my name is Jenny. I'm a veteran of the United States Air Force. I served in three deployments, two of which were to Afghanistan during my time in active duty. Now I work as a Re-adjustment Counselor and the Global War on Terrorism Outreach

Specialist at the Boston Vet Center. At the Vet Center we offer male and female combat veterans readjustment services that include individual, marital, family, and group counseling. The Vet Center also specializes in military sexual trauma and bereavement counseling.

I am looking for new ways to serve the increasing population of women veterans. Some of my ideas include a combat veterans' support group where women can discuss the impact—good and bad—that the military has had on their lives. Also, to get veterans moving together, rather than just talking together, I have offered several outings for veterans to participate in outdoor adventure activities such as canoeing, kayaking, hiking, and biking. This non-traditional support group can build much-needed social networks for recently returned veterans. If you are interested in joining either of these groups, please call me at the Boston Vet Center, 617-424-0665.

*by Jenny D'Olympia, Boston Vet Center*

Department of Veterans' Services  
Attn: Women Veterans' Network  
600 Washington Street, Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02111

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### Employment Assistance for Women Veterans



**MASSACHUSETTS  
ONE-STOP  
CAREER CENTERS**

To address the needs of veterans, the Department of Workforce Development employs veterans' representatives at each and every one of its 32 One-Stop Career Centers. The mission of veterans' representatives is to maximize employment services to veterans, especially those with disabilities and employment barriers. One-Stop Career Centers rely on the expertise of veterans' representatives for guidance in determining and interpreting state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to veterans.

Formally known as Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs), veterans' representatives provide intensive case management services to qualified Massachusetts veterans. Veterans' representatives employ a holistic approach in the delivery of quality and enhanced services, referring veterans to a host of Career Center resources and workshops.

Veterans' representatives conduct initial assessments to define job readiness, review eligibility, and gather information. With the veteran, the veterans' representative cre-

ates case plans, develops personal employment plans, monitors progress, defines needs, demonstrates effective job search strategies, and determines the most appropriate plan of action to assist veterans in achieving their employment goals.

For more information, go to [www.mass.gov/dwd](http://www.mass.gov/dwd).  
by veterans' representatives: *Frank Boback (The Work Place)*, *John Gillespie (JobNet)*, and *Larry Spiegel (Boston Career Link)*

### Northampton Cable TV Channel 15 Focuses on Women Veterans



*(l-r) Dan Vasquez (camera), Heidi Kruckenberg (Women Veterans' Network), Gloria H. Tuperkeizsis (producer), Andy Porter (director), and Julie Belieu (director)*

In late July 2006, Women Veterans' Network Coordinator, Heidi Kruckenberg appeared as a special guest on *The Gloria Tuperkeizsis Show*, which airs on Northampton Cable Channel 15. Heidi and Gloria spoke about women veterans' issues.